

Reasonable Adjustments for SVQs and Related Qualifications

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Contents

Introduction	1
Access to assessment: the principles	2
Quality assurance in centres: responsibilities for internal quality assurance procedures	3
Evidence to support a reasonable adjustment	5
Assessment arrangements explained	6
Extra time	7
ICT	8
Arrangements for candidates with visual impairment	9
Arrangements for deaf candidates or those with a hearing impairment	10
Who to contact for more information	13

Introduction

This is a guide for centres and staff who offer SVQs and related qualifications and it is about what to do when providing a reasonable adjustment for a disabled candidate. It details:

- ◆ the principles that apply when determining a candidate's need for a reasonable adjustment
- ◆ the quality assurance procedures required to ensure that the reasonable adjustment meets the assessment needs of the candidate

Reasonable adjustments are designed to enable candidates who are disabled to access an assessment without compromising its integrity.

Candidates are individuals with a diverse range of needs, and it is important that you consider the individual assessment needs of your candidates when you are considering a reasonable adjustment.

Access to assessment: the principles

SQA has a responsibility to ensure that assessment leading to certification is rigorous and fair for all candidates, and that it allows candidates to demonstrate the skills, knowledge and understanding required for the award.

The principles that our access to assessment policy are based on are:

1 Candidates for whom reasonable adjustments are provided should potentially have the ability to achieve the qualification.

You have a responsibility to ensure that your candidate is entered for the qualification at the right level. Reasonable adjustments are designed to enable access to an assessment. For example, if a candidate has difficulty with writing or reading, a reasonable adjustment, such as the use of ICT, or the use of BSL should alleviate this disadvantage.

2 The integrity of the qualification must be maintained.

Reasonable adjustments must be considered in the context of the competences that must be met in each qualification. SQA cannot make any adjustment to the competences that are being assessed. This means that it may not be possible to make reasonable adjustments where:

- ◆ an assessment requires the demonstration of a practical competence
- ◆ the assessment criteria have to be fully met
- ◆ the units or qualifications confer a licence to practise

3 Any adjustment that you provide should be tailored to meet a candidate's individual needs.

The individual needs of candidates should be the basis for providing a reasonable adjustment. For example, a candidate with writing difficulties might not be at any disadvantage in a practically-based assessment. However, the same candidate might have difficulties compiling written evidence for their portfolio.

4 Any reasonable adjustments provided should reflect, as far as possible, the candidate's normal way of learning and producing evidence of competence.

The method used to facilitate access to an assessment will generally, though not always, be the method that has been used in the learning/working environment. For example, if a candidate with dyslexia normally uses ICT in the workplace to overcome writing difficulties, this should be the reasonable adjustment provided.

Quality assurance in centres: responsibilities for internal quality assurance procedures

You have a responsibility to ensure that you have effective internal quality assurance procedures for identifying candidates' assessment needs and providing reasonable adjustments.

You should follow the four stages described in this section:

- ◆ identify the assessment need
- ◆ select an appropriate reasonable adjustment
- ◆ verify the need for the reasonable adjustment
- ◆ authorise the use of the reasonable adjustment

At all stages, professional dialogue is essential between staff who act as advocates for the candidate and those who are responsible for quality assurance within the centre.

Stage 1: Identify any difficulties the candidate is having or is likely to have with assessment in the subject

Wherever possible, a candidate's likely difficulties should be identified before he or she embarks on the qualification. In some cases, however, the difficulties may only become apparent during the candidate's programme of work. The need for a particular arrangement could be identified by the candidate or by the assessor.

Stage 2: Work out how the candidate's assessment needs can be met, ensuring the standards will not be compromised

This is the stage where you determine whether or not a reasonable adjustment will be required. This could be quite straightforward, or it could require discussion with us. The national occupational standards provide the performance criteria that must be met for each qualification and list the evidence that is needed to show that the standards have been met. For example, candidates may be required to show that they have knowledge, practical skills, and the ability to work in a particular way. Additional range statements may suggest ways of gathering this evidence.

If your candidate is able to achieve the standards, but is unable to do so using the suggested methods, there is often scope to propose alternative ways of generating the necessary evidence. The assessor or trainer will develop any such proposals in consultation with the candidate.

Stage 3: Verify the candidate's need for a reasonable adjustment

This is a key stage in your internal quality assurance procedures. Verifying the need is extremely important for two reasons:

- ◆ You need to be assured that the decision to provide a reasonable adjustment accords with both SQA guidance and any relevant legislation.

- ◆ We need to ensure that centres have internal quality assurance processes in place for providing reasonable adjustments for candidates. Evidence of your verification process, the personnel involved, and the evidence used to make your decisions, must be available to us.

Stage 4: Head of Centre or delegated manager authorises the reasonable adjustment

This final stage can be carried out by the Head of Centre or the person who has responsibility for your centre's internal quality assurance systems. In providing a reasonable adjustment, your centre is acknowledging that it has met its responsibilities in terms of quality assuring the appropriateness of the adjustment.

Evidence to support a reasonable adjustment

Evidence of a candidate's need for a reasonable adjustment must be available to SQA on request.

Evidence of the internal verification meeting

This might be minutes or notes of the verification meeting where all relevant information and evidence is considered prior to providing the adjustment.

Confirmation from candidates

You must provide confirmation from candidates that they have been involved in discussions about, and have agreed to, the adjustments being provided for them.

You must also obtain consent from candidates for their disability/difficulty to be disclosed to SQA if needed. All this information can be on one form signed by the candidate.

Evidence of the candidate's disability and how this affects assessment

In all cases, there should be evidence of the nature and extent of the disability or difficulty. Information from professionals — for example, medical practitioners — may be available. The evidence might include a working file containing information about the candidate's disability and/or additional support needs, including, for example: reports, assessments and minutes of meetings.

Where a candidate has recently changed centre, there should be a transfer of information from the previous centre wherever possible. This information will inform assessment planning, and will be part of the evidence base.

Assessment arrangements explained

This section describes some examples of reasonable adjustments. It is not an exhaustive list — you should work from the need of the individual candidate in identifying the most appropriate adjustment rather than from a fixed list of options. Again, where particular examples of disabilities are used, they are just examples and not a list of all eventualities.

Remember

Before you provide a reasonable adjustment for a candidate you must:

- ◆ have (and retain) the required evidence of the candidate's eligibility
- ◆ have internally verified this evidence
- ◆ be satisfied that the reasonable adjustment does not change the published assessment requirements in a significant way

If you are in any doubt about whether the reasonable adjustment significantly impacts on the standards, contact us for advice as soon as possible, and before the candidate undertakes the assessment. You should submit full details of the candidate's disability, the proposed reasonable adjustment, and the details of the qualification and level,

to: aarequests@sqa.org.uk

Extra time

The amount of extra time given should accurately reflect the candidate's assessment needs. While the candidate will always have the option of using the extra time, you should monitor the overall use of extra time to check the accuracy of your assessment of need.

You only need to contact SQA to ask about the reasonableness in providing extra time in an assessment where the performance of a task in a specified time is an assessment requirement. For example, in a word processing assessment, the number of words produced in a set time may be an assessment requirement.

Remember

Too much extra time in an assessment may be tiring for the candidate and may ultimately disadvantage them.

Example:

Claire has a mild dyslexic condition that affects her speed of processing. The centre provides Claire with 25% extra time based on their evidence of her need for extra time to complete written tasks.

ICT

For many disabled candidates, computers and other forms of assistive technology (including screen readers, speech recognition/activated systems) provide an effective means of communication. It is important, however, that where ICT is used, it is appropriate to candidates' needs and that there has been sufficient time and training to ensure that they are able to use it effectively.

Your centre's responsibilities

It is your responsibility to:

- ◆ Ensure that there has been sufficient time and training for the candidate to use ICT effectively. The arrangements for the use of ICT should usually reflect the candidate's usual way of working.
- ◆ Make the necessary arrangements for the provision of ICT. Remember to ensure that, where possible, contingency arrangements are in place to deal with any technical problems.
- ◆ Make sure the candidate's word-processed work is printed out and kept for verification purposes.

Remember

The use of ICT must not compromise the validity of the assessment. If you are in any doubt, please contact us for advice.

Example:

A centre provides the use of ICT with spellcheck facility for Michael, who has dyslexia and has significant reading and writing difficulties.

Arrangements for candidates with visual impairment

There are a range of arrangements suitable for visually impaired candidates, including the use of ICT, adapted print and formats. They include:

- ◆ printing on a specified colour of paper
- ◆ large print
- ◆ different fonts
- ◆ use of coloured overlays
- ◆ use of low vision aids
- ◆ use of CCTV
- ◆ use of Braille
- ◆ speech to text software
- ◆ text to speech software

Arrangements for deaf candidates or those with a hearing impairment

There are a range of arrangements suitable for hearing impaired/ deaf candidates including:

- ◆ use of lip reading
- ◆ speech to text software
- ◆ text to speech software
- ◆ use of BSL

When you have a candidate who uses BSL in their assessments, there are certain procedures you should follow:

- ◆ Making the necessary arrangements for providing an appropriately skilled sign communicator.
- ◆ Making sure that both the candidate and the sign communicator are advised of, and sufficiently well prepared for, this arrangement.
- ◆ Ensuring that the sign communicator has the right level of technical knowledge and skill in sign language. The sign communicator's skills need to be sufficient to reflect the candidate's breadth of knowledge and ability.
- ◆ Preparing a translation/ transcript in English of the candidate's signed responses for verification purposes. This translation/transcription should be carried out by someone with the appropriate level of skill in signing.

Guidelines for sign communicators: what to do (and what not to do)

Preparation

It is very important that you

- ◆ Have had previous practice in working with the candidate, and both of you should be well prepared for working together under the assessment conditions that will apply.
- ◆ Are an appropriately skilled sign communicator and that you have had the opportunity to prepare for signing the assessment.
- ◆ Are able to communicate effectively with the candidate.
- ◆ Have a good working knowledge of the area you are being asked to sign.

You must not:

- ◆ take the lead or initiative
- ◆ give any additional explanation or assistance

Guidance for candidates: working with a sign communicator

- ◆ You should have had previous practice in working with your sign communicator, and both of you should feel well prepared.

You **must**:

- ◆ Clearly indicate to your sign communicator which parts of the assessment you wish to have signed.

You may:

- ◆ Ask for parts of the assessment to be signed again as often as necessary, but the sign communicator cannot suggest or choose which parts.

Who to contact for more information

If you have a query about a particular reasonable adjustment, please contact our team on 0345 213 6890 or e-mail them at aarequests@sqa.org.uk.

If you have a general enquiry about SQA or its qualifications, please call our Customer Contact Centre on 0845 279 1000 or e-mail them at customer@sqa.org.uk.